

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS,

and

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
TEACHERS,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:25-cv-02429-MKV

**Declaration of Ezra Susser
(Witness B)**

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PROFESSORS,

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DECLARATION OF EZRA SUSSER

I, Ezra Susser, declare as follows:

1. I am a Professor of Epidemiology and Psychiatry at the Mailman School of Public Health.
2. I have been at Columbia for about 35 years, and I used to be the chair of the epidemiology department.
3. I received my Bachelor of Arts (BA) from Columbia University in 1974, my Master of Public Health (MPH) from Columbia University in 1982, and my Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) from Columbia University in 1992.

4. My research focuses on mental health disorders, like schizophrenia. My research has examined the role of early life experience in health and disease throughout the life course and has sought to uncover the developmental origins of psychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders such as schizophrenia, autism and ADHD, as well as other complex diseases.

5. I am over the age of 18 and competent to testify as to the matters set forth in this affidavit based on my own personal knowledge.

6. I am a member of AAUP and AFT.

7. My position depends significantly on grant funding, and the vast majority of grants that I receive are federal grants.

8. I have had several grants terminated. I am the lead or co-lead on two of the terminated grants. There is at least one more terminated grant on which I was a researcher but was not the lead or co-lead.

9. The grant on which I am listed as the principal investigator (PI) at Columbia is an NIH grant that funded a large project to study the genomics of schizophrenia.

10. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) sent to Columbia, who then forwarded to me, a notification from NIH that the grant was terminated. The notice stated, “This project has been terminated due to unsafe antisemitic actions that suggest the institution lacks concern for the safety and well-being of Jewish students.”

11. This project, which was done in partnership with the University of Washington and the University of Cape Town, focused on the Xhosa population of South Africa. We worked with that community because there is more genetic variety in Africa than on any other continent, and thus the results of this genomic study would have critical implications for an understanding of schizophrenia around the world, including in the US.

12. This project has been funded by NIH for more than 10 years, and the team would have finished the genomic sequencing required for the analysis of the data in just about one more year. We could have finished at least a basic genomic analysis in just about one year; and could have completed it all within two years under a no cost extension which we expected to be granted by the agency, because that would not have required new funds from the agency but rather saving funds to spend in the following year.

13. The project is now stopped. This cuts off federal funding to complete the analysis of the data, including the completion of the genomic sequencing. Without this funding, we won't be able to draw any more conclusions about schizophrenia. We won't be able to share our findings with the scientific community and with the world. Years and years of hard work are basically lost.

14. The cessation of this research represents a huge loss to my research and to the understanding of schizophrenia. No other research group is poised to step into this critical research. Whether or not it will ever be completed is now uncertain because of this funding termination. It won't be completed unless we find alternative funding from somewhere, and at this juncture, it doesn't seem likely that we will find that funding.

15. I coordinated the project and my team played the central data management role. Funds are not available at other sites for others to assume this role.

16. The termination in grant funding and resulting halt of the work also breaks the relationship of trust between me and my collaborators outside of Columbia University, and that harm would persist even if this project were to restart. It is also detrimental to this my reputation and overall work.

17. The grant supported a subcontract to a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania and their team. Because of this grant termination, their funding has also stopped.

18. The grant also partially supported my salary and the salaries of five other team members at Columbia University. Over time, the grant has supported about 20-25% of my salary.

19. The total funding amount for the project for 2025 was \$447,238.

20. Without funding, I will likely need to lay off at least one but probably several people from this team. That will be a loss of expertise and knowledge for the project, even if this project could be re-continued in the future.

21. I was also the co-lead on a grant that funded a training program that has been in existence continuously since 1972 and that trained many of the leaders in psychiatric epidemiology in the country.

22. Another AAUP/AFT member is a faculty member in the Mailman School of Public Health and is also a co-lead of this training program.

23. The leads of the program received notice from Columbia University that the federal funding for this training grant has stopped.

24. The loss of such a training grant is a loss of the ability to train the next generation of psychiatric epidemiologists. Training the next generation has been an important part of my career.

25. There were three post-docs in the program, and they now have no guarantee of funding from the federal government.

26. None of the work funded by these two grants was related to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Neither program has faced any investigation or complaint related to antisemitism. If the government had started an investigation into my programs, I am sure they would have found that

there is no antisemitism in my programs. Moreover, a large proportion of the investigators are Jewish. If any investigation had been started on a legal basis, I would have participated, I would have participated in any official investigation for my programs as appropriate under the law.

27. The training program has trained many students from Israel, including some of the leaders in the field in Israel. The training program has had relationships with Israeli institutions. We also have relationships with researchers from other countries, and do not have a specific policy favoring collaboration with any one country over others. The Israeli collaborations evolved naturally from our faculty connections, as did other collaborations.

28. I am Jewish. Many of the students in the training program have been Jewish.

29. Overall, the funding withdrawals by the federal government create enormous uncertainty about the future of my research. Since scientific research typically involves long-term multi-year commitments, the funding withdrawal irrevocably complicates the planning necessary to undertake this work.

30. I find it very distressing. It has been such a shock. It hurts to lose the work I've done. It hurts to watch my colleagues, who have also lost grants, in such distress and uncertainty.

31. Being forced to stop this work also hurts the legacy of my parents, who were among the legendary founders of the field of epidemiology after World War II. They devoted much of the first half of their lives opposing apartheid in South Africa and much of the second half of their lives building up the field of epidemiology in South Africa. I too devoted much of my career to epidemiology, mainly but not only psychiatric epidemiology, in the United States, in South Africa and in other regions of the world. Now the grant terminations are jeopardizing the future of psychiatric epidemiology.

32. The harm to the field of epidemiology will also harm our community health in general. It creates a risk of infectious diseases returning and spreading.

33. I understand that Title VI and its implementing regulations require the government to provide notice and opportunity for a hearing, followed by a finding on the record, before terminating federal funding to any program or part thereof based on a violation of Title VI. I was not provided any such notice, and I am not aware of any such notice having been provided or any such hearing occurring prior to the termination of \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia.

34. I also feel chilled in my speech. Personally, even though I want to try not to restrict what I say, I still feel like I need to be more careful in what I say in teaching and around the university. I wouldn't just go out and say things without worry like in the past.

35. For example, I teach a class that is about the history of epidemiology. It includes a lot of social history and topics like race, sex, and social injustices. It is designed to help students think about the present and identify their own biases through the lens of a history that they were previously not aware of. I feel like I need to be more careful as I teach about these subjects now.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: 3 | 30 | 25

Signed: 

Ezra Susser

Professor of Epidemiology and Psychiatry